



Security Council

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LETTER DATED 24 JANUARY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I write in response to the letter to you from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq dated 11 January 1996 (S/1996/33, annex) concerning the vessel Michael-R, which recently delivered a shipment of humanitarian supplies to Iraq.

I want first to correct some important factual errors in that letter. Contrary to what was stated by the Minister, the Michael-R was not intercepted in the Arabian Gulf by the "United States Navy", but by US naval forces acting as part of the Multinational Interception Force (MIF) authorized by United Nations Security Council resolution 665 (1990).

Further, the Michael-R was not, as claimed in the Minister's letter, forced to proceed to Bahrain, nor was it forced to submit to a second inspection of its cargo. MIF inspectors initially found that the Michael-R's cargo was inaccessible and could not be safely inspected. Normally, the cargo would have had to be reconfigured in port to allow an at-sea inspection in accordance with MIF regulations. However, after consultations between the MIF and the World Food Programme (WFP), a one-time exception to the MIF regulations was granted and the vessel was allowed to proceed directly to its destination in Iraq, after only a brief delay.

Effective implementation of resolution 665 (1990) depends on the ability to conduct thorough vessel inspections at sea. Cargo configuration is regulated to ensure accessibility, safety for MIF inspection personnel and to expedite the passage of authorized cargoes to their destinations. All vessels transiting the Gulf are treated equally under the MIF regulations. The rules governing configuration and at-sea inspection of cargoes are a standing requirement, which have been well-publicized to Governments and shippers through worldwide distribution of a Notice to Mariners (NOTAM) by the US Defense Mapping Agency Naval Warning Center. The Michael-R's shipping agent has confirmed that he was aware of the required procedures.



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The value of MIF inspections, and of the regulations that facilitate them, has been demonstrated in recent weeks by the discovery by MIF inspectors of shipments of unauthorized goods hidden beneath Iraq-bound food cargoes.

The cooperation between MIF and WFP in the case of the Michael-R demonstrates the commitment of the MIF forces to effectively implement resolution 665 (1990) by ensuring that legitimate humanitarian cargoes can reach Iraq as safely and rapidly as possible, while diverting and preventing the delivery of unauthorized goods.

I would appreciate it if you would circulate the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Madeline K. ALBRIGHT
